

# Comparative History

by Thomas Welskopp

This article traces the fate of historical comparison in the discipline of history and discusses its function, capacities, and theoretical and methodological foundations. So long as the discipline of history was informed by historicism and thus emphasized individuality, it was profoundly sceptical about comparisons, but pioneers from the neighbouring social sciences eventually opened up to the comparative perspective. This meant at the same time an attempt at closer relations with the natural sciences. Comparison was introduced by way of modernisation theory into social history, which in recent decades has been criticized by competing approaches. From a systematic perspective, however, historical comparison is richer in possibilities than is generally assumed. It also encourages more circumspect modelling and typification.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction: Initial Scepticism towards Comparison in the Discipline of History
2. Imitation of the Natural Sciences and the Pioneers of Historical Comparison
3. Modernisation Theory and Comparison in Social History
4. Criticism of Comparative Social History and Recent Responses
5. Typification and Models
6. Appendix
  1. Bibliography
  2. Notes

Citation

## Introduction: Initial Scepticism towards Comparison in the Discipline of History

During the foundational period of its justification as a scholarly discipline, history developed precisely as a *non-comparative* field of study. It considered its primary task instead to be that of distancing itself from the natural sciences, which in the nineteenth century were on the verge of encyclopaedically classifying all things – living and less so –, dividing them into genera or categorizing them in some way. In contrast, the school of German historicism, i.e. figures like Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) (→ [Media Link #ab](#)) and Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–1884) (→ [Media Link #ac](#)), approached history differently, in a way that for them embodied an alternative, albeit no less serious and ultimately even a superior kind of scientific character. Their core concepts were individuality, continuity, and development. In the eyes of the historicists, history ought to conceive of the social, human world as a continuous process of coming into and passing out of being, whose individual moments were not merely points along the way but also the very mode by which the otherwise intangible infinite was manifested in the finite (or the general in the specific). Therefore each of these moments in history possessed its own intrinsic value as an individual unit, incapable of being reduced further.<sup>1</sup>

▲ 1

Rejecting comparative perspectives as a reflex against the natural sciences was standard in history until the early twentieth century – and until much later in the discipline's conservative currents.<sup>2</sup> Yet speculative forays into the comparative dimensions of historical interpretation can already be found in Droysen, whose theoretical and methodological reflections were far ahead of their time. He implicitly differentiated between the material process of history, which according to the doctrine of historicism followed an unbroken, continuous development, and the discipline of history, which may carve up that process for the purpose of analysis, especially when it wants to portray the unique character of the various epochs in a precise manner.<sup>3</sup> If Droysen limited his thoughts here to the comparison between consecutive epochs – today one would speak of diachronic or inter-temporal comparison – his logic could clearly be expanded to the comparison of contemporary phenomena as well, which just might be varying results of one and the same process of development.

▲ 2

As a component of numerous nationalist movements in Europe and in the resulting ideological obsession with the vari-

ous nation states, the discipline of history was not receptive to these tentative efforts at expansion. Indeed, the opposite was the case. Political and moral arguments were also marshalled against historical comparison. The historian intent on substantiating the unique character of his own nation had to view every comparison with others as an equation with them and thus as an affront to his homeland. This reasoning reappeared much later, around the 1980s, only turned in a different direction. Scholars of the Holocaust warned against trivializing that "singular" crime with comparisons. Similarly criticized were approaches that placed National Socialism in the context of a European fascism or that tried to identify its significance in the transnational modernisation process, which otherwise had positive ideological connotations. Thus these more recent critics, who saw history primarily as an endower of identity, also interpreted comparison as an act of equation and generally looked upon it with political and moral suspicion. The sole valid aspect of such criticism is the observation that comparative reflection indeed requires a detached, cool, analytical stance and thus contributes only qualifiedly to the warm-hearted creation of identity.

▲3

## Imitation of the Natural Sciences and the Pioneers of Historical Comparison

It was precisely this analytical precision that the early prophets and pioneers of historical comparison had in mind as they came on the scene in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> They consciously borrowed from the natural sciences, hoping that the scientific mode of working and thinking, which presumably seemed connected to comparison, would endow the interpretive humanistic discipline of history with an allegedly unattainable level of precision and power of causal explanation. The sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) (→ Media Link #af) called comparison an "indirect experiment".<sup>5</sup> He took up both of the methods of comparison delineated – admittedly for the natural sciences – by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) (→ Media Link #ag): the method of difference, which traces differences between two test procedures back to a single variant circumstance when all other circumstances are equal, and the method of agreement, which derives the agreement of test results from the effect of a single common circumstance when all other circumstances are different.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly Marc Bloch (1886–1944) (→ Media Link #ah), the French medieval historian and co-founder of the *Annales* school, concluded that historians should compare neighbouring societies that are either as different or as similar as possible. It was only the latter mode, however, that he used in his own work as a historian.<sup>7</sup>

▲4

The scientific illusion had historical causes. It is no accident that the first calls for comparative research came not from the historiographical mainstream, but rather from medieval studies, social history or – with Otto Hintze (1861–1940) (→ Media Link #ai) – institutional history. These fields were complex as well as multilayered and varied according to context. Thus they defied conventional, linear historical narration. The yearning for scientific rigor in comparative studies can therefore be interpreted as the expression of a search for a new, higher level of causal clarity. However understandable this wish was, the trail it blazed turned out to be impracticable. On the one hand it spawned little genuine comparative research in the discipline of history. On the other hand, comparative research designs in themselves produced neither explanatory models nor theoretical conclusions.<sup>8</sup> The actual link between historical comparison and heightened explanatory power is that the former must be guided by theory to yield the latter; but then it allows a more precise empirical verification of the theoretical approach than any single-case study.<sup>9</sup>

▲5

It is not the imitation of scientific experiment per se that promises increased insight and explanatory power in a comparative design, but rather its necessarily greater reliance on theory and higher theoretical standards.<sup>10</sup> Such had long been put into practice by historically-oriented sociologists like Max Weber (1864–1920) (→ Media Link #aj): they used comparison as a matter of course in their work, relying on the heuristic development of concepts in order to proceed from empirical typification to the formulation of historical theories. This method developed out of a normative construction of abstract concepts that "consciously ordered" observed correlations; in the process it came up against its own limitations, thus necessitating a modification of its theoretical underpinnings. The outcome of Weberian research was twofold: knowledge of correlations in the form of a catalogue of categories, and historically-based typologies.<sup>11</sup>

▲6

## Modernisation Theory and Comparison in Social History

The call for historical comparison long belonged chiefly to a domain of programmatic announcements. An excess of

methodological predeterminations and misgivings could only have discouraged rather than inspired practical application.<sup>12</sup> And so, beginning in the 1960s, the theoretical impetus came first from Anglo-Saxon historical sociology, for which there was and continues to be no proper equivalent in Germany. The diffusion of modernisation theory as a supplement or rather as an alternative to Marxist historical theory had provided this impulse.<sup>13</sup> As a universalist conception for the explanation of Western development, it properly required both its own confirmation through the comparison of the largest possible number of cases and, at the same time, the explanation of departures from the general pattern. Thus arose studies – for example on revolutions in Europe and social protest – with large numbers of cases that chose national units of comparison and reduced them to a small selection of significant variables; for historians this generally represented an overly radical isolation of the object of comparison from its historical context.<sup>14</sup> On the other end of the spectrum stood investigations of the ramifications of similar translational processes in various countries and their generally individualized explanation.<sup>15</sup> Usually no more than three or four units of comparison were chosen for such studies, and, in contrast to the first research strategy described, they delved quite deeply into the respective contexts – their aim, however, was still that of identifying and isolating (when possible) a decisive factor that would ostensibly account for the differences between nations.<sup>16</sup> Both procedures clearly reveal their debt to John Stuart Mill's experimental logic, and although many of these studies were ambitiously designed and appeared promising, nevertheless their rigorously formal but essentially reductionist arguments rarely convinced specialists in related historical fields.<sup>17</sup>

▲7

Up-and-coming German social history (*Sozialgeschichte*), especially its then leading current, which was on the point of distinguishing itself as "*Historische Sozialwissenschaft*" (historical social science), adopted many ideas from historical sociology and prominently set the course for comparative historical studies. New here was the combination of modernisation theory's universalist conception with the thesis of the "German *Sonderweg*," or unique historical path to National Socialism – a notion whose very phrasing resonated with comparative presuppositions.<sup>18</sup> Historical sociology bequeathed a preoccupation with the nation-state as a quasi "natural" or "given" unit of comparison as well as an exclusive focus on the macro-level of large-scale social and political phenomena.<sup>19</sup> One hoped now, through the comparison of nation-states with regard to selected social and institutional spheres, to be able to elaborate a more precise interpretation of Germany's unique development. This meant that, with respect to the customs of historical sociology, a smaller number of cases was deemed adequate – a historian could deal with two or three at the most, it was thought. At the same time the chronological parameters were reduced. In historical sociology they could easily cover several centuries; now they spanned sixty or eighty years, still a hardy challenge for historians of course. Finally, the field was so strongly dominated by contrasting and individualizing comparisons – it was ultimately the explication of German peculiarities that was of especial interest – that such was considered nearly the only legitimate comparative perspective in the methodological debate. The focus on Germany even justified extremely imbalanced, i.e. "asymmetrical", comparative constructions, such that the entities used for comparison seemed to serve as nothing more than ephemeral foils.<sup>20</sup>

▲8

The incorporation of historical comparison into social history in this special, restricted form was still very much a programmatic affair in the 1970s. Comparative hypotheses and suggestions for related comparative designs greatly outnumbered empirical studies, and they became the reigning interpretive model, at least in discussions on method. In Germany, however, comparative history only truly took off in the 1980s.<sup>21</sup> In a 1996 retrospective essay, Hartmut Kaelble could list around 200 comparative studies by European scholars on nineteenth- and twentieth-century history, and since then the number has certainly multiplied.<sup>22</sup> In the meantime a debate arose that itself paradoxically embodies an unintentional piece of *histoire croisée*. For empirical studies in comparative history underwent a remarkable liberating impulse. Although often authored by the students of leading advocates of a comparative perspective, emerging studies surprisingly burst swiftly and decisively out of the straight-jacket into which comparison had been forced by the methodological pronouncements of "historical social science". Wave upon wave of comparative dissertations proved to be revisions of the "*Sonderweg* thesis".<sup>23</sup> Detailed investigations tended to unearth transnational similarities rather than defining differences, and, all in all, they relativised the importance of the nation-state as a parameter of analysis.<sup>24</sup> The field expanded thematically from a "conventional" social history of social groups and movements to include comparative constructions that comprehended the entire spectrum of social and culture phenomena.<sup>25</sup> In the process the focus shifted from the comparison of nation states with regard to specific dimensions to the comparison of phenomena in specific contexts. The nation-state was now only one among many such possible contexts, and favouring it over others required exceptional justification.<sup>26</sup>

▲9

The same period witnessed systematic criticism of the comparative approach. This criticism, however, was aimed less at the new empirical studies than at the older, programmatic pronouncements about comparison that had been made by "historical social science" in its formative phase in the 1970s.<sup>27</sup> One fierce attack was directed at historical comparison's supposed fixation with nation-states. The first empirical studies, however, had already abandoned this as a methodological premise; in truth, such a fixation was the consequence of a naive use of ready-made collections of statistics on the national level. Here the nation-state served primarily, and with little reflection, as an easily accessible data container. What the further development of practical comparative research indicated, however, was rather the challenging or at least relativising of the use of nationally-defined objects of comparison. Numerous studies display a wide variety of comparative dimensions, one of which can, but need not, be the nation-state. Furthermore, graduated comparative designs of this kind allow the importance of the nation-state context vis-à-vis other factors to be determined more precisely than is possible in non-comparative studies. Moreover, comparison requires the precise explanation of what actually pertains to the realm of the "nation-state context". The case might be rather clear for state institutions and law codes, but it becomes less so as soon as one considers, for example, their power vis-à-vis that of transnational economic processes to determine the legal framework of markets.<sup>28</sup>

▲ 10

A "secondary charge" consistently crops up in criticisms of historical comparison, namely that it runs the risk of being gullible to, or powerless to break free of, the subliminal "master-narratives" of related national historiographies. But if a methodological approach exists for identifying and transcending precisely these "ruts" of national historiography, then it is historical comparison. For when attempting to answer a comparative question, the first thing it uncovers is the blind spots of specialist literature. As a result, comparison is generally required to undertake its own laborious archival research in all the contexts under consideration. "Asymmetrical" comparison, then, which is not fundamentally illegitimate, reaches its methodological limits when it is forced to rely on the secondary literature of a comparative country without being able to recognize the underlying "master-narrative". The charge also proves baseless for yet another reason: it is precisely from comparative studies that fruitful approaches to historiographical comparison have been developed in the last ten years. The comparative lens is perfectly suited to elaborating and explaining both the peculiarities of national "master-narratives" and the basic patterns, at times uncannily similar, that they have in common.<sup>29</sup>

▲ 11

Comparison was released from the fetters of the nation-state at the same time as it bid farewell to its fixation with "macro-social" phenomena. It has now long since been agreed that emotions and experiences can also be compared, as can religious practices, or that comparisons can even be made on the level of individual social actors. One can profitably compare villages in one or more regions and add the nation-state context, for example by asking to what extent the "state" was even "felt" in such a local context at a given time. Sven Reichardt's study of the Italian *Squadristi* and the German SA penetrates into the deep correlations between concrete violent fascist groups. What is more, it also makes comparisons on the lines of gender, environment, neighbourhood, city/province, region, and nation-state, although here the emphasis is less on state institutions than on the ideology of social movements throughout society. Reichardt assesses their influence as slight in comparison with experiences of violence rooted in notions about gender and in environment.<sup>30</sup> To take another example, the iron and steel industry had its decisive spheres of operation in Germany and the United States. It depended to a great extent, however, on the economic development of companies, which on account of the clustering of heavy industry in certain areas in turn produced clear regional differences. The development of companies and the conditions of business depended primarily on specific characteristics of the industry, and this makes both cases seem markedly similar over long stretches of the period studied. The greatest differences between Germany and America were caused by the intervention of state institutions, which, however, varied greatly in the three identifiable phases of development and could easily be eclipsed by industry factors.<sup>31</sup> These examples serve to illustrate the essentially boundless spectrum of imaginable comparative configurations.<sup>32</sup> The possibilities depend only on the kinds of questions asked and the theoretical approach used.<sup>33</sup>

▲ 12

A contrary criticism was launched from the camp of cultural transfer studies. On the one hand, it was argued, comparison "essentializes" its objects, treating them as constituting a given, material, fixed contrast; on the other hand, it supposedly constructs mere "sham comparisons" between entities that display at most only a semantic similarity.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, comparison is distinguished precisely by its identification and reconstruction of a phenomenon's manifestations in at least two socio-cultural contexts.<sup>35</sup> This means, first, that a central goal of comparative research is simply to detect and define the "phenomenon" that is to be tracked, i.e. the object of comparison, within the studied context. The precise object of comparison only emerges during the process of comparing. Second, this very procedure precludes "sham com-

parisons", since when no common, theoretically identifiable "phenomenon" is at hand, then there can be no starting-point for a comparison. But the obligation of precisely defining the object of study is only especially pivotal for comparison. In reality, it applies to single-case studies of any kind, which otherwise equally run the risk of not pursuing a true "phenomenon", but rather of chasing a phantom. The constructivist character of all historical scholarship simply comes earlier and more forcefully to the fore in comparative than in other kinds of research.

▲ 13

Furthermore, definition of this kind weakens the contention, on the one hand, that comparison is unable to penetrate the relationships between the contexts being studied, and in reality can only juxtapose "what is not mixed".<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, comparison is accused of treating its objects as fixed, absolute dimensions. Precisely when scholars turn to European history does it become clear that no comparison truly works without relational history (*Beziehungsgeschichte*).<sup>37</sup> Not only do historians not work under laboratory conditions, but the search for the common phenomenon whose manifestations they wish to explain properly assumes the existence of a relationship, regardless of whether it happens to be a form of transfer, of exchange, or of common dependence on transnational processes.<sup>38</sup> Even in cases of mutual differentiation – such as the "age-old enmity" between France and Germany, which was staged with an overdose of causative semantics – there was so much common ground in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that one can legitimately speak of a coherent phenomenon.<sup>39</sup>

▲ 14

Comparative historical studies have also long since outgrown the phase of static comparative frameworks. The point is no longer to search only for commonalities and differences within a chronologically "frozen" configuration, but rather to track changes and their causes over longer periods. The manifestations of a studied phenomenon can grow more similar to one another and then diverge again, or vice versa. Last but not least, the factors contributing to such changes could also include reciprocal perceptions and reactions to them, such that under the historian's watchful gaze it is not only the relationships between contexts that change but the very contexts themselves. Interest in these kinds of constant metamorphoses and shifting influences was the inspiration for a *histoire croisée*.<sup>40</sup> Yet the objects of its inquiries can doubtlessly also be studied within a comparative framework, as is convincingly demonstrated by recent comparative work on the history of historiography. Nor is it only the in-depth study of single individuals that is suited to mastering the denseness of a network of relationships, as a *histoire croisée* suggests. The two approaches are ultimately distinguished by their general focus, and a good comparative history will always pay attention to changes both in contexts and in phenomena, just as a good *histoire croisée* also always compares the protagonists of its relational histories to a certain extent. Comparison, transfer and *histoire croisée* surely stand to profit when they are treated as mutually supplemental perspectives rather than pitted against one another.<sup>41</sup>

▲ 15

The most important consequence resulting from comparison's above-mentioned applications is surely the limiting of the number of cases to be considered. Sensitivity to changes over time and non-contemporaneous change on many levels require much deeper immersion in the respective contexts than can be achieved by analyses with a large number of cases. The by now extensive practice of historical comparison shows that a certain kind, which Charles Tilly appropriately called "variation finding", has gained predominance in historical scholarship.<sup>42</sup> This kind of comparative design aims at localizing a phenomenon in all the contexts under consideration and explaining it in the entire range of its encountered manifestations. It can thus go far beyond a mere identification and interpretation of commonalities and differences, so long as it aims at describing their totality as a spectrum of diverging manifestations of a common underlying principle, thus determining the possible range of variations and their typical forms.<sup>43</sup> Finally, what is at stake – unlike in most of historical sociology – is not the establishment and testing of individual macro-causal "mechanisms", but typification: the construction of empirically-based historical configurations within a common "*Gattung*" (genus), as Droysen called it.<sup>44</sup>

▲ 16

## Typification and Models

Comparison must be informed by generalisable theoretical models. On the one hand, meaningful comparisons can only be made when there is a common point of reference. Indeed, a "phenomenon" must first be able to be described independently of the comparative context in order for it to then be identified, defined, and interpreted in its manifestations

within the context. Such a point of reference provides the *tertium comparationis*.<sup>45</sup> In order to perform its function, this *tertium* must be a genuine "third part". If it is actually one of the comparative cases themselves – only dressed up in abstract concepts, thus formalized, and then styled at the same time as a norm establishing the standards of comparison – then all other observed cases will of necessity appear as more or less significant deviations, or as faulty examples or anomalies. This was absolutely the case with the application of universalistic modernisation theory, which essentially embodied an idealised image of American development in the twentieth century. On the other hand, the *tertium* should be informed by theory, since only then generalisable statements about the comparative cases will be encountered. Typification that proceeds without a theoretical criterion or that, as Theodor Schieder (1908–1984) (→ Media Link #an) still hoped, aims to replace it, remains arbitrary and without true validity.<sup>46</sup>

▲ 17

Theoretical models in this sense are conceptual systems whose elements may derive from empirical observation but that have gone through a process of clarification and definition that detaches them from their original context. These requirements have given rise to the belief that modelling, as a *tertium comparationis* in historical comparison, ideally ought to maintain the same distance to all individual cases, i.e. "be carried out in 'equidistance' to the cases being studied". Exponents of cultural transfer studies and *histoire croisée* have disputed that such is in principle possible. In their view, historians are always influenced by their national origin, by the discursive practices of the scholarly networks in which they operate, and by intellectual, cultural, and linguistic traditions, such that they inevitably (if only unconsciously) develop models that are to a certain extent "close to home".<sup>47</sup> This argument is not entirely to be dismissed. At any rate, sober theory construction presupposes a conscious examination of national or milieu-related theoretical traditions; even the "transcendence" of national historiographies, which is indispensable to historical comparison, cannot be achieved without a testing of the respective central categories. This basically makes a theoretical comparison necessary as a preliminary to historical comparison, and thus here at least a greater opportunity for symmetrical modelling is afforded than in single-case studies. In comparative historical scholarship, theoretical modelling tends towards typification. This is facilitated on the one hand by the graduated, subsidiary combination of several levels of generalisation. On the other hand, the necessity of effectively portraying empirically-based types in a plausible way encourages the modificative tweaking of modelling in the very process of practical research.<sup>48</sup> In defiance of all fly-by-night fashions in historiography, comparative history is in flower. And the possibilities of this approach are still far from exhausted.

▲ 18

Thomas Welskopp, Bielefeld

## Appendix

### Bibliography

Berger, Stefan: Comparative History, in: idem et al. (eds.): Writing History: Theory and Practice, London 2003, pp. 161–179.

idem / Lorenz, Chris (eds.): The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories, Houndmills et al. 2008.

Biernacki, Richard Jr.: The Fabrication of Labor: Germany and Britain, 1640–1914, Berkeley et al. 1995.

Bloch, Marc: Für eine vergleichende Geschichtsbetrachtung der europäischen Gesellschaften, in: Matthias Middell et al. (eds.): Alles Gewordene hat Geschichte: Die Schule der Annales in ihren Texten 1929–1992, Leipzig 1994, pp. 121–167.

Braembussche, Antoon A. van den: Historical Explanation and Comparative Method: Towards a Theory of the History of Society, in: History and Theory 28 (1989), pp. 1–24.

Budde, Gunilla-Friederike: Auf dem Weg ins Bürgerleben: Kindheit und Erziehung in deutschen und englischen Bürgerfamilien 1840–1914, Göttingen 1994.

Conrad, Christoph / Conrad, Sebastian: Wie vergleicht man Historiographien?, in: idem (eds.): Die Nation schreiben:

Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich, Göttingen 2002, pp. 11–45.

Conrad, Sebastian: Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Nation: Geschichtsschreibung in Westdeutschland und Japan 1945–1960, Göttingen 1999.

Droysen, Johann Gustav: Historik: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe von Peter Leyh und Horst Walter Blanke, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2007, vol. 2: Texte im Umkreis der Historik: Unter Berücksichtigung der Vorarbeiten von Peter Leyh nach den Erstdrucken und Handschriften herausgegeben von Horst Walter Blanke.

Durkheim, Emile: Règles de la méthode sociologique, Paris 1960 (first edition 1895, online: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1055050> [05/08/2009]).

Eisenstadt, Shmuel N.: Modernization, Protest, and Change, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1966.

idem: Revolution and the Transformation of Societies: A Comparative Study of Civilizations, New York 1978.

Espagne, Michel: Sur les limites du comparatisme en histoire culturelle, in: Genèses 17 (1994), pp. 112–121.

idem: Les transferts culturels franco-allemands, Paris 1999.

Haupt, Heinz-Gerhard: Comparative History, in: Neil J. Smelser et al. (eds.): International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Amsterdam et al. 2001, vol. 4, pp. 2397–2403.

idem / Kocka, Jürgen: Historischer Vergleich: Methoden, Aufgaben, Probleme: Eine Einleitung, in: idem (eds.): Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung, Frankfurt am Main 1996, pp. 9–45.

Jeismann, Michael: Das Vaterland der Feinde: Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich 1792–1918, Stuttgart 1992.

Jordan, Stefan: Theorien und Methoden der Geschichtswissenschaft: Orientierung Geschichte, Paderborn et al. 2009.

Kaelble, Hartmut: Gesellschaften vergleichen: Der historische Vergleich in Frankreich und Deutschland: Französisch-deutsche Gemeinsamkeiten des Vergleichs, in: Peter Schöttler et al. (eds.): Plurales Deutschland – Allemagne Plurielle: Festschrift für Étienne François – Mélanges Étienne François, Göttingen 1999, pp. 25–37.

idem: Der historische Vergleich: Eine Einführung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt am Main 1999.

idem: Vergleichende Sozialgeschichte: Forschungen europäischer Historiker, in: Heinz-Gerhard Haupt et al. (eds.): Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung, Frankfurt am Main 1996, pp. 91–130.

Kocka, Jürgen: Angestellte zwischen Faschismus und Demokratie: Zur politischen Sozialgeschichte der Angestellten: USA 1890–1940 im internationalen Vergleich, Göttingen 1977.

idem: Comparative Historical Research: German Examples, in: International Review of Social History 38 (1993), pp. 369–379.

Matthes, Joachim: The Operation Called "Vergleichen", in: idem (ed.): Zwischen den Kulturen? Die Sozialwissenschaften vor dem Problem des Kulturvergleichs, Göttingen 1992, pp. 75–99.

McAdam, Doug / Tarrow, Sidney / Tilly, Charles: Dynamics of Contention, Cambridge, Mass. et al. 2001.

Middell, Matthias: Kulturtransfer und Historische Komparatistik – Thesen zu ihrem Verhältnis, in: Comparativ 10 (2000), pp. 7–41.

Mill, John Stuart: Philosophy of Scientific Method, edited by Ernst Nagel, New York 1950 (first edition 1881), pp. 211–233, online: <http://www.archive.org/details/johnstuartmillsp012451mbp> [05/08/2009].

Moore, Barrington: Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt, White Plains, New York 1978 (German edition: Ungerechtigkeit: Die sozialen Ursachen von Unterordnung und Widerstand, Frankfurt am Main 1987).

idem: Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World, Boston 1966 (German edition: Soziale Ursprünge von Diktatur und Demokratie: Die Rolle der Grundbesitzer und Bauern bei der

Entstehung der modernen Welt, Frankfurt am Main 1974).

Paulmann, Johannes: Feindschaft und Verflechtung: Anmerkungen zu einem scheinbaren Paradox, in: Martin Aust et al. (eds.): Vom Gegner lernen: Feindschaften und Kulturtransfers im Europa des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, Frankfurt am Main 2007, pp. 341–356.

idem: Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer: Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts, in: Historische Zeitschrift 267, 3 (1998), pp. 649–685.

Reichardt, Sven: Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadristum und in der deutschen SA, Köln 2002.

Rose, Mary B.: Firms, Networks and Business Values: The British and American Cotton Industries since 1750, Cambridge 2000.

Schieder, Theodor: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen vergleichender Methoden in der Geschichtswissenschaft, in: idem: Geschichte als Wissenschaft: Eine Einführung, 2. ed., Munich et al. 1968, pp. 195–219, 234–237.

Schnabel-Schüle, Helga (ed.): Vergleichende Perspektiven – Perspektiven des Vergleichs: Studien zur europäischen Geschichte von der Spätantike bis ins 20. Jahrhundert, Mainz 1998.

Siemens, Daniel: Metropole und Verbrechen: Die Gerichtsreportage in Berlin, Paris und Chicago 1919–1933, Stuttgart 2007.

Skocpol, Theda: Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology, in: idem (ed.): Vision and Method in Historical Sociology, Cambridge et al. 1984, pp. 356–391.

idem / Somers, Margaret: The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry, in: Comparative Studies in Society and History 22 (1980), pp. 174–197.

Syga, Judith: Die Rezeption der Annales durch die deutsche Strukturgeschichte (1945–1965): Französisch-deutsche Transfers zwischen Ablehnung, Bewunderung und Aneignung, Masterarbeit Universität Bielefeld / Université Paris VII (MS) 2008.

Tilly, Charles: Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons, New York 1984.

Vogel, Jakob: Nationen im Gleichschritt: Der Kult der "Nation in Waffen" in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1871–1914, Göttingen 1997.

Welskopp, Thomas: Arbeit und Macht im Hüttenwerk: Arbeits- und industrielle Beziehungen in der deutschen und amerikanischen Eisen- und Stahlindustrie von den 1860er bis zu den 1930er Jahren, Bonn 1994.

idem: Crossing the Boundaries? *Dynamics of Contention* Viewed from the Angle of a Comparative Historian, in: International Review of Social History 49 (2004), pp. 122–131.

idem: Der "echte Historiker" als "richtiger Kerl": Neue Veröffentlichungen (nicht nur) zum 200. Geburtstag von Johann Gustav Droysen, in: Historische Zeitschrift 288, 1 (2009), pp. 385–407.

idem: Der Mensch und die Verhältnisse: "Handeln" und "Struktur" bei Max Weber und Anthony Giddens, in: Thomas Mergel et al. (eds.): Geschichte zwischen Kultur und Gesellschaft: Beiträge zur Theoriedebatte, München 1997, pp. 39–70.

idem: Stolpersteine auf dem Königsweg: Methodenkritische Anmerkungen zum internationalen Vergleich in der Gesellschaftsgeschichte, in: Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 35 (1995), pp. 339–367.

idem: Die Theoriefähigkeit der Geschichtswissenschaft, in: Renate Mayntz (ed.): Akteure, Mechanismen, Modelle: Zur Theoriefähigkeit makro-sozialer Analysen, Frankfurt am Main 2002, pp. 61–90.

idem: Theorien in der Geschichtswissenschaft, in: Gunilla Budde et al. (ed.): Geschichte: Studium – Wissenschaft – Beruf: Akademie Studienbuch Geschichte, Berlin 2008, pp. 138–157.

Werner, Michael: Dissymmetrien und symmetrische Modellbildungen in der Forschung zum Kulturtransfer, in: Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink et al. (eds.): Kulturtransfer im Epochenbruch: Frankreich-Deutschland 1770 bis 1815, Leipzig 1997,



pp. 87–101.

Werner, Michael / Zimmermann, Bénédicte: Introduction, in: idem (eds.): *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée*, Paris 2004, pp. 7–14.

idem: Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung: Der Ansatz der *Histoire croisée* und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002), pp. 607–636.

Wirz, Albert: Für eine transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27 (2001), pp. 489–498.

#### Notes

1. ^ Welskopp, *Der "echte Historiker"* 2009.
2. ^ Haupt / Kocka, *Historischer Vergleich* 1996, p. 20.
3. ^ Droysen, *Historik* 2007, vol. 2.1, p. 183.
4. ^ Kaelble, *Gesellschaften* 1999, p. 25; idem, *Der historische Vergleich* 1999.
5. ^ Durkheim, *Règles* 1960 (first edition 1895), p. 24; Berger, *Comparative History* 2003, p. 165.
6. ^ Mill, *Philosophy* 1950, p. 211–233.
7. ^ Bloch, *Für eine vergleichende Geschichtsbetrachtung* 1994, pp. 121–167.
8. ^ Haupt, *Comparative History* 2001, p. 2398.
9. ^ Welskopp, *Stolpersteine* 1995, p. 339f.
10. ^ Haupt / Kocka, *Historischer Vergleich*, p. 24f.
11. ^ Welskopp, *Der Mensch* 1997.
12. ^ For example Schieder, *Möglichkeiten* 1968, pp. 195–219, 234–237.
13. ^ For example Eisenstadt, *Modernization* 1966; idem, *Revolution* 1978.
14. ^ Recently McAdam, *Dynamics* 2001; my critique: Welskopp, *Crossing the Boundaries* 2004. Skocpol / Somers, *The Uses of Comparative History* 1980; Skocpol, *Emerging Agendas* 1984.
15. ^ For example Moore, *Social Origins* 1966; idem, *Injustice* 1978.
16. ^ Tilly, *Big Structures* 1984.
17. ^ A good recent example: Biernacki, *The Fabrication of Labor* 1995.
18. ^ Haupt, *Comparative History* 2001, p. 2398f.
19. ^ Kocka, *Comparative Historical Research* 1993, pp. 369–379. Charles Tilly established the "nation-state" as a "natural" unit of comparison because he rejected the concept "society" as "deterministic" (rather: marxistically infected): Tilly, *Big Structures* 1984, p. 64, 80.
20. ^ For example Kocka, *Angestellte* 1977.
21. ^ Paulmann, *Internationaler Vergleich* 1998, pp. 649f.
22. ^ Kaelble, *Vergleichende Sozialgeschichte* 1996, pp. 94f.
23. ^ Budde, *Auf dem Weg* 1994.
24. ^ Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde* 2002.
25. ^ Vogel, *Nationen* 1997.
26. ^ Welskopp, *Arbeit* 1994.
27. ^ Werner, *Dissymmetrien* 1997; idem / Zimmermann, *Introduction* 2004; idem, *Vergleich* 2002; Wirz, *Für eine transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte* 2001; Middell, *Kulturtransfer* 2000, pp. 7–41.
28. ^ Rose, *Firms* 2000.
29. ^ Conrad / Conrad, *Wie vergleicht man Historiographien* 2002; Conrad, *Auf der Suche* 1999; Berger / Lorenz, *The Contested Nation* 2008.
30. ^ Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde* 2002.
31. ^ Welskopp, *Arbeit* 1994.
32. ^ Basically in the same line of thought: Schnabel-Schüle, *Vergleichende Perspektiven* 1998.
33. ^ For example Matthes, *The Operation* 1992.
34. ^ Espagne, *Les transferts* 1999, p. 37; idem, *Sur les limites* 1994.
35. ^ Welskopp, *Stolpersteine* 1995, p. 343.
36. ^ Espagne, *Sur les limites* 1994, p. 112.
37. ^ Paulmann, *Internationaler Vergleich* 1998, p. 681.
38. ^ Siemens, *Metropole* 2007.
39. ^ Jeismann, *Das Vaterland* 1992; further reading: Paulmann, *Feindschaft* 2007.
40. ^ Jordan, *Theorien* 2009, p. 208.
41. ^ That is the conclusion of the excellent, so far unpublished master's thesis: Syga, *Die Rezeption* 2008.
42. ^ Tilly, *Big Structures*, pp. 81ff.

43. ^ Braembussche, Historical Explanation 1989, pp. 13ff.
44. ^ Welskopp, Stolpersteine 1995, pp. 352ff.
45. ^ ibid., p. 358.
46. ^ Schieder, Möglichkeiten 1968, pp. 217f.
47. ^ Werner, Dissymmetrien 1997, p. 88; idem / Zimmermann, Vergleich 2002, p. 610.
48. ^ Welskopp, Die Theoriefähigkeit 2002.

This text is licensed under: CC by-nc-nd - Attribution, Noncommercial, No Derivative Works

---

Translated by: Patrick Baker  
Editor: Johannes Paulmann  
Copy Editor: Jennifer Willenberg

---

DDC: 901 [Info  ] , 907 [Info  ]





---

#### Citation





Welskopp, Thomas: Comparative History, in: European History Online (EGO), published by the Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2010-12-03. URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/welskoppt-2010-en> URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-20100921414 [YYYY-MM-DD].

When quoting this article please add the date of your last retrieval in brackets after the url. When quoting a certain passage from the article please also insert the corresponding number(s), for example 2 or 1-4.

#### Link #ab

- Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/17303591>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118598279>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118598279.html>)




#### Link #ac

- Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–1884) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/100182524>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/11852755X>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd11852755X.html>)





#### Link #af

- Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/56609141>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118528297>)





#### Link #ag

- John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/100189299>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118582461>)





#### Link #ah

- Marc Bloch (1886–1944) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/46757545>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118659081>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118659081.html>)

#### Link #ai

- Otto Hintze (1861–1940) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/17277875>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118551329>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118551329.html>)

#### Link #aj

- Max Weber (1864–1920) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/100180950>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118629743>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118629743.html>)

#### Link #an

- Theodor Schieder (1908–1984) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/64019935>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info>)

/gnd/118607472) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118607472.html>)



**Kompetenzzentrum**  
für elektronische Erschließungs-  
und Publikationsverfahren in  
den Geisteswissenschaften



**INSTITUT FÜR  
EUROPÄISCHE  
GESCHICHTE**

<http://www.ieg-ego.eu> ISSN 2192-7405